# AN

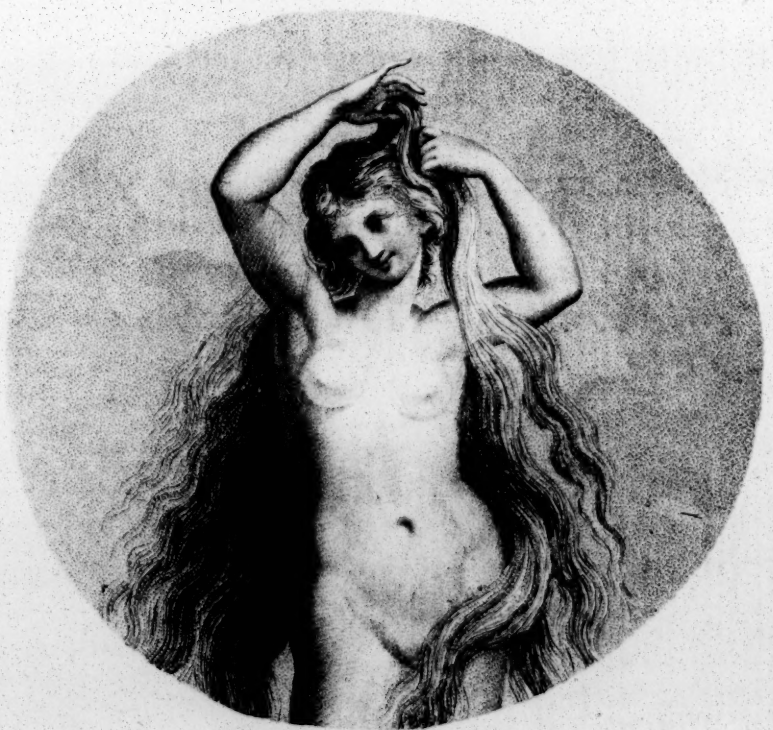
# ESSAY

ON

# THE BEAUTIFUL.

From the Greek of

PLOTINUS.



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The Reader is requeſted to correct the following Errors.

Introduction, page 1. line 9. for *it own ſake*, read *its own ſake*. P. 37. l. 5. for *and what means*, read *and by what means*. P. 38. in the note, for *the goddeſs of ſenſe*, read *the goddeſs of imagination*.

# INTRODUCTION.

IT may ſeem wonderful that language, which is the only method of conveying our conceptions, ſhould, at the ſame time, be a hindrance to our advancement in philoſophy: but the wonder ceaſes when we conſider, that it is ſeldom ſtudied as the vehicle of truth, but is too frequently eſteemed for it own ſake, independent of its connection with things. This obſervation is remarkably verified in the Greek Language; which as it is the only repoſitory of ancient wiſdom, has,

unfortunately for us, been the means of concealing, in ſhameful obſcurity, the moſt profound reſearches and the ſublimeſts truths. That words, indeed, are no otherwiſe valuable than as ſubſervient to things, muſt ſurely be acknowledged by every liberal mind, and will alone be diſputed by him who has ſpent the prime of his life, and conſumed the vigour of his underſtanding, in verbal criticiſms and grammatical trifles. And, if this is the caſe, every lover of truth will only ſtudy a language for the purpoſe of procuring the wiſdom it contains; and will doubtleſs wiſh to make his native language the vehicle of it to others. For, ſince all truth is eternal, its nature can never be altered by tranſpoſition, though, by this means,

its dreſs may be varied, and become leſs elegant and refined. Perhaps, even this inconvenience may be remedied by ſedulous cultivation; at leaſt, the particular inability of ſome, ought not to diſcourage the well-meant endeavours of others. Whoever reads the lives of the ancient Heroes of Philoſophy, muſt be convinced that they ſtudied things more than words, and that Truth alone was the ultimate object of their ſearch: and, he who wiſhes to emulate their glory, and participate their wiſdom, will ſtudy their doctrines more than their language, and value the depth of their underſtandings far beyond the elegance of their compoſition. The native charms of Truth will ever be ſufficient to allure the truly philoſophic mind; and

he who has once diſcovered her retreats, will ſurely endeavour to fix a mark by which they may be detected by others.

But, though the miſchief ariſing from the ſtudy of words is prodigious, we muſt not conſider it as the only cauſe of darkening the ſplendors of truth, and obſtructing the free diffuſion of her light. Different manners and philoſophies have equally contributed to baniſh the goddeſs from our realms, and to render our eyes offended with her celeſtial light. Hence we muſt not wonder, that, being indignant at the change, and perceiving the empire of ignorance riſing to unbounded dominion, ſhe has retired from the ſpreading darkneſs, and concealed herſelf in the tranquil and divinely lucid

regions

regions of mind. For, we need but barely ſurvey modern purſuits to be convinced, how little they are connected with wiſdom. Since, to deſcribe the nature of ſome particular place, the form, ſituation, and magnitude of a certain city; to trace the windings of a river to its ſource, or delineate the aſpect of a pleaſant mountain; to calculate the fineneſs of the ſilk-worm's threads, and arrange the gaudy colours of butterflies; in ſhort, to purſue matter, through its infinite diviſions, and wander in its dark labyrinths, is the employment of the philoſophy in vogue. But ſurely the energies of intellect are more worthy our concern than the operations of ſenſe; and the ſcience of univerſals, permanent and fixt, muſt be ſuperior

to the knowledge of particulars, fleeting and frail. Where is a ſenſible object to be found, which abides for a moment the ſame; which is not either riſing to perfection, or verging to decay; which is not mixed and confuſed with its contrary; whoſe flowing nature no reſiſtance can ſtop, nor any art confine? Where is the Chemiſt, who, by the moſt accurate analyſation, can arrive at the principles of bodies; or who, though he might be ſo lucky in his ſearch as to detect the atoms of Democritus, could by this means give reſpite to mental inveſtigation? For every atom, ſince endued with figure, muſt conſiſt of parts, though indiſſolubly cemented together; and the immediate cauſe of this cement muſt be ſomething incorporeal, or knowledge

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can have no ſtability, and enquiry no end. Where, ſays Mr. Harris, is the microſcope which can diſcern what is ſmalleſt in nature? Where the teleſcope, which can ſee at what point in the univerſe wiſdom firſt began? Since then there is no portion of matter which may not be the ſubject of experiments without end, let us betake ourſelves to the regions of mind, where all things are bounded in intellectual meaſure; where every thing is permanent and beautiful, eternal and divine. Let us quit the ſtudy of particulars, for that which is general and comprehenſive, and, through this, learn to ſee and recognize whatever exiſts.

With a view to this deſirable end, I have preſented the reader with a ſpecimen of that ſublime wiſdom which

firſt aroſe in the colleges of the Egyptian prieſts, and flouriſhed afterwards in Greece. Which was there cultivated by Pythagoras, under the myſterious veil of numbers; by Plato, in the graceful dreſs of poetry; and was ſyſtematized by Ariſtotle, as far as it could be reduced into ſcientific order. Which, after becoming in a manner extinct, ſhone again with its priſtine ſplendor, among the philoſophers of the Alexandrian ſchool; was learnedly illuſtrated, with Aſiatic luxuriancy of ſtyle by Proclus; was divinely explained by Iamblichus; and profoundly delivered in the writings of Plotinus. Indeed, the works of this laſt philoſopher are particularly valuable to all who deſire to penetrate into the depths of this divine wiſdom. From the exalted

alted nature of his genius, he was called Intellect, by his contemporaries; and is ſaid to have compoſed his books under the influence of divine illumination. Porphyry relates, in his Life, that he was four times united, by an ineffable energy, with the divinity; which, however ſuch an account may be ridiculed in the preſent age, will be credited by every one who has properly explored the profundity of his mind. The facility and vehemence of his compoſition was ſuch, that when he had once conceived a ſubject, he wrote as from an internal pattern, without paying much attention to the orthography, or reviewing what he had written: for, the celeſtial vigour of his intellect rendered him incapable of trifling concerns; and, in this

reſpect, inferior to common underſtandings; as the eagle, which, in its bold flight, pierces the clouds, ſkims the ſurface of the earth with leſs rapidity than the ſwallow. Indeed, a a minute attention to trifles is inconſiſtent with great genius of every kind; and it is on this account, that retirement is ſo abſolutely neceſſary to the diſcovery of truths of the firſt dignity and importance; for how is it poſſible to mix much with the world, without imbibing the falſe and puerile conceptions of the multitude; and, without loſing that true elevation of ſoul, which comparatively deſpiſes every mortal concern. Plotinus, therefore, conſcious of the incorrectneſs of his writings, ariſing from the rapidity, exuberance, and daring ſublimity

mity of his thoughts, committed their reviſion to his diſciple Porphyry; who, though inferior in depth of thought to his maſter, was, on account of his extraordinary abilities, called by way of eminence, the Philoſopher.

The deſign of the following diſcourſe is to bring us to the perception of the beautiful itſelf, even while connected with a corporeal nature, which muſt be the great end of all true philoſophy, and which Plotinus happily obtained. To a genius, indeed, truly modern, with whom the crucible and the air-pump are alone the ſtandards of truth, ſuch an attempt muſt appear ridiculous in the extreme. With theſe, nothing is real but what the hand can graſp, or the corporeal eye perceive: and nothing uſeful but what pampers the

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the appetite, or fills the purſe: but, unfortunately their perceptions, like Homer's frail dreams, paſs through the ivory gate; and are, conſequently, empty and fallacious, and contain nothing belonging to the vigilant ſoul. To ſuch as theſe, a treatiſe on the Beautiful cannot be addreſſed: ſince its object is too exalted to be approached by thoſe engaged in the impurities of ſenſe; and too bright to be ſeen by the eye accuſtomed to the obſcurity of corporeal viſion. But it is alone proper to him, who is ſenſible that his ſoul is ſtrongly marked with ruin by its union with body; who conſiders himſelf in the language of Empedocles, as

Heaven's exile, ſtraying from the orb of light;

and who ſo ardently longs for a return

turn to his true country, that to him, as to Ulyſſes, when ſighing for Ithaca,

* Slow ſeems the ſun to move, the hours to roll;
His native home deep-imag'd in his ſoul.

But here it is requiſite to obſerve, that our aſcent to this region of Beauty muſt be made by gradual advances: for, from our aſſociation with matter, it is impoſſible to paſs directly, and without a medium, to ſuch tranſcendent perfection; but we muſt proceed in a manner ſimilar to thoſe who paſs from darkneſs to the brighteſt light, by advancing from places moderately enlightened, to ſuch as are the moſt luminous of all. It is neceſſary, therefore, that we ſhould become very familiar with the moſt abſtract contem-

* Pope's Homer's Odyſſey, book xiii. ver. 37.

plations;

plations; and that our intellectual eye ſhould be ſtrongly irradiated with the light of ideas which precedes the ſplendors of the beautiful itſelf, like the brightneſs which is ſeen on the ſummit of mountains, previous to the riſing of the ſun. Nor ought it to ſeem ſtrange, if it ſhould be ſome time before even the liberal ſoul can recognize the beautiful progeny of intellect as its kindred and allies: for, from its union with body, it has drank deep of the cup of oblivion, and all its energetic powers are ſtupified by the intoxicating draught. So that the intelligible world, on its firſt appearance, is utterly unknown by us, and our recollection of its inhabitants, entirely loſt: and we become ſimilar to

Ulyſſes

Ulyſſes on his firſt entrance into Ithaca, of whom Homer ſays,

* Yet had his mind, thro' tedious abſence, loſt
The dear remembrance of his native coaſt.

For,

Now all the land another proſpect bore,
Another port appear'd, another ſhore,
And long continued ways, and winding floods,
And unknown mountains crown'd with unknown woods:

until the goddeſs of wiſdom purges our eyes from the miſts of ſenſe, and ſays to each of us, as ſhe did to Ulyſſes,

Now lift thy longing eyes, while I reſtore,
The pleaſing proſpect of thy native ſhore.

For then will

——————— the proſpect clear,
The miſts diſperſe, and all the coaſt appear.

Let us then humbly ſupplicate the irradiations of wiſdom, and follow Plo-

* Odyſſey, book xiii. ver. 223.

tinus

tinus as our divine guide to the beatific viſion of the Beautiful itſelf: for, in this alone can we find perfect repoſe, and repair thoſe deſtructive clefts and chinks of the ſoul, which its departure from the light of good, and its lapſe into a corporeal nature have introduced.

But, before I conclude, I think it neceſſary to caution the reader, not to mix any modern enthuſiaſtic opinions with the doctrines contained in the following diſcourſe: for there is not a greater difference between ſubſtance and ſhade than between ancient and modern enthuſiaſm. The object of the former was the higheſt good and the ſupreme beauty; but that of the latter is nothing more than a phantom raiſed by bewildered imaginations,

floating on the unſtable ocean of opinion, the ſport of the waves of prejudice, and blown about by the breath of factious party. Like ſubſtance and ſhade, indeed, they poſſeſs a ſimilitude in outward appearance, but in reality they are perfect contraries; for the one fills the mind with ſolid and durable good; but the other with empty deluſions; which, like the ever running waters of the Danaides, glide away as faſt as they enter, and leave nothing behind but the ruinous paſſages through which they flowed.

I only add, that the enſuing treatiſe is deſigned as a ſpecimen (if it ſhould meet with encouragement) of my intended mode of publiſhing all the works of Plotinus. The undertaking is, I am ſenſible, arduous in the extreme;

extreme; and the diſciples of wiſdom are unfortunately few: but, as I deſire no other reward of my labour, than to have the expence of printing defrayed, and to ſee Truth propagated in my native tongue; I hope thoſe few will enable me to obtain the completion of my deſires.

For then, to adopt the words of Ulyſſes,

* That view vouchſaf'd, let inſtant death ſurpriſe,
With ever-during ſhade theſe happy eyes!

* Odyſſey, book vii. ver. 303.

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C. P.

# CONCERNING THE BEAUTIFUL.

BEAUTY *, for the moſt part, conſiſts in objects of ſight: but it is alſo received through the ears, by the

* It is neceſſary to inform the Platonical reader, that the Beautiful, in the preſent diſcourſe, is conſidered according to its moſt general acceptation, as the ſame with the Good: though, according to a more accurate diſtinction, as Plotinus himſelf informs us, the Good is conſidered as the fountain and principle of the Beautiful. I think it likewiſe proper to obſerve, that as I have endeavoured, by my paraphraſe, to render as much as poſſible the obſcure parts evident, and to expand thoſe ſentences which are ſo very much contracted in the original, I ſhall be ſparing of notes; for my deſign is not to accommodate the ſublimeſt truths to the meaneſt underſtandings,

the ſkilful compoſitions of words, and the conſonant proportions of ſounds; for in every ſpecies of harmony, beauty is to be found. And if we riſe from ſenſe into the regions of ſoul, we ſhall there perceive ſtudies and offices, actions and habits, ſciences and virtues, inveſted with a much larger portion of beauty. But whether there is, above theſe, a ſtill higher beauty, will appear as we advance in its inveſtigation. What is it then, which cauſes bodies to appear fair to the ſight, ſounds beautiful to the ear, and ſcience and

derſtandings (as this would be a contemptible and uſeleſs proſtitution), but to render them perſpicuous to truly liberal and philoſophic minds. My reaſons for adopting this mode of paraphraſe, may be ſeen in the preface to my tranſlation of Orpheus's Hymns.

virtue

virtue lovely to the mind? May we not enquire after what manner they all partake of beauty? Whether beauty is one and the ſame in all? Or, whether the beauty of bodies is of one kind, and the beauty of ſouls of another? And again, what theſe are, if they are two? Or, what beauty is, if perfectly ſimple, and one? For ſome things, as bodies, are doubtleſs beautiful, not from the nature of the ſubjects in which they reſide, but rather by ſome kind of participation: but others again appear to be eſſentially beautiful, or beauties themſelves; and ſuch is the nature of virtue. For, with reſpect to the ſame bodies, they appear beautiful to one perſon, and the reverſe of beauty to another; as if the eſſence of body were a thing differ-

ent from the eſſence of beauty. In the firſt place, then, what is that, which, by its preſence, cauſes the beauty of bodies? Let us reflect, what moſt powerfully attracts the eyes of beholders, and ſeizes the ſpectator with rapturous delight: for if we can find what this is, we may perhaps uſe it as a ladder, enabling us to aſcend into the region of beauty, and ſurvey its immeaſurable extent.

It is the general opinion, that a certain commenſuration of parts to each other, and to the whole, with the addition of colour, generates that beauty which is the object of ſight; and that in the commenſurate and the moderate alone, the beauty of every thing conſiſts. But from ſuch an opinion, the compound only, and not the ſimple,

ple, can be beautiful; the ſingle parts will have no peculiar beauty; and will only merit that appellation, by conferring to the beauty of the whole. But it is ſurely neceſſary, that a lovely whole, ſhould conſiſt of beautiful parts; for the fair can never riſe out of the deformed. But from ſuch a definition, it follows, that beautiful colours, and the light of the ſun, ſince they are ſimple, and do not receive their beauty from commenſuration, muſt be excluded the regions of beauty. Beſides, how, from ſuch an hypotheſis, can gold be beautiful? Or the glittering of night, and the glorious ſpectacle of the ſtars? In like manner the moſt ſimple muſical ſounds, will be foreign from beauty; though, in a ſong wholly beautiful, every note muſt be beauti-

ful, as neceſſary to the being of the whole. Again, ſince the ſame proportion remaining, the ſame face is to one perſon beautiful, and to another the reverſe, is it not neceſſary, to call the beauty of the commenſurate one kind of beauty, and the commenſuration another kind; and that the commenſurate is fair, by means of ſomething elſe? But, if transferring themſelves to beautiful ſtudies, and fair diſcourſes, they ſhall aſſign as the cauſe of beauty in theſe, the proportion of meaſure; what is that which, in beauful ſciences, laws, or diſciplines, is called commenſurate proportion? Or, in what manner can ſpeculations themſelves be called mutually commenſurate? If it be ſaid, becauſe of the inherent concord; we reply, that there

is a certain concord and conſent in evil ſouls, a conformity of ſentiment, in believing (as it is ſaid) that temperance is folly, and juſtice generous ignorance. It appears, therefore, that the beauty of the ſoul is every virtue; and this ſpecies of the beautiful poſſeſſes far greater reality than any of the ſuperior we have mentioned. But, after what manner in this, is commenſuration to be found? For it is neither like the ſymmetry in magnitude, or in numbers. And ſince the parts of the ſoul are many, in what proportion and ſyntheſis, in what temperament of parts, or concord of ſpeculations, does beauty conſiſt? Laſtly, Of what kind is the beauty of intellect itſelf, abſtracted from every corporeal concern, and intimately converſing with itſelf alone?

We ſtill, therefore, repeat the queſtion, What is the beauty of bodies? It is ſomething, which, at firſt view, preſents itſelf to ſenſe; and which the ſoul familiarly apprehends, and eagerly embraces, as if it were allied to itſelf: But when it meets with the deformed, it haſtily ſtarts from the view, and retires abhorrent from its diſcordant nature. For ſince the ſoul in its proper ſtate, ranks according to the moſt excellent eſſence in the order of things, when it perceives any object related to itſelf, or the mere veſtige of a relation, it congratulates itſelf on the pleaſing event, and aſtoniſhed with the ſtriking reſemblance, * enters deep into

* *Enters deep into its eſſence*, &c. The Platonic philoſophy inſiſts much on the neceſſity of retiring

to its eſſence, and, by rouſing its dormant powers, at length perfectly recollects

into ourſelves in order to the diſcovery of truth: and on this account, Socrates, in the firſt Alcibiades, ſays, that the ſoul entering into herſelf will contemplate whatever exiſts, and the divinity himſelf. Upon which Proclus thus comments, with his uſual elegance and depth, (in Theol. Plat. p. 7.) "For the ſoul (ſays he) contracting herſelf wholly into a union with herſelf, and into the centre of univerſal life, and removing the multitude and variety of all-various powers, aſcends into the higheſt (περιωπὴν) place of ſpeculation, from whence ſhe will ſurvey the nature of beings. For if ſhe looks back upon things poſterior to her eſſence, ſhe will perceive nothing but the ſhadows and reſemblances of beings: but if ſhe returns into herſelf, ſhe will evolve her own eſſence, and the reaſons ſhe contains. And at firſt indeed ſhe will as it were only behold herſelf; but when by her knowledge ſhe penetrates more profoundly in her inveſtigations, ſhe will find intellect ſeated in her eſſence, and the univerſal orders of beings: but when ſhe advances into the more interior receſſes of herſelf, and as it were into the ſanctuary of the ſoul, ſhe will be enabled to contemplate, with her eyes cloſed to corporeal viſion, the genus of the gods, and the unities of beings. For all things reſide in us, (ψυχικῶς) after a manner correſpondent to the nature of the ſoul: and on this account we are naturally enabled to know all things,

by

collects its kindred and allies. What is the ſimilitude then between the beauties of ſenſe, and that beauty which is divine? For if there be any ſimilitude, the reſpective objects muſt be ſimilar. But after what manner are the two beautiful? For it is by participation of ſpecies that we call every ſenſible object beautiful. Thus, ſince every thing void of form is by nature fitted for its reception, as far as it is deſtitute of reaſon and form, it is baſe, and ſeparate from the divine reaſon, the great fountain of forms; and whatever is entirely remote from this immortal ſource, is perfectly baſe, and deformed. * And ſuch is matter,

by exciting our inherent powers, and images of whatever exiſts."

* *And ſuch is matter*, &c. There is nothing affords more wonderful ſpeculation than matter, which

ter, which by its nature is ever averſe from the ſupervening irradiations of form.

which ranks as the laſt among the univerſality of things, and has the ſame relation to being, as ſhade to ſubſtance. For, as in an aſcending ſeries of cauſes, it is neceſſary to arrive at ſomething, which is the firſt cauſe of all, and to which no perfection is wanting: ſo in a deſcending ſeries of ſubjects, it is equally neceſſary we ſhould ſtop at ſome general ſubject, the loweſt in the order of things, and to which every perfection of being is denied. But let us hear the profound and admirable deſcription, which Plotinus gives us of matter, lib. vi. Ennead. 3. and of which the following is a paraphraſe. "Since matter, ſays he, is neither ſoul nor intellect, nor life, nor form, nor reaſon, nor bound, but a certain indefiniteneſs; nor yet capacity, for what can it produce? Since it is f reign from all theſe, it cannot merit the appellation of being, but is deſervedly called non-entity. Nor yet is it non entity in the manner as motion, or ſtati n: but it is true non-entity, the mere ſhadow and imagination of bulk, and the deſire of ſubſiſtence: abiding without ſtation, of itſelf inviſible, and avoiding the deſire of him who wiſhes to perceive its nature. Hence, when no one perceives it, it is then in a manner preſent: but cannot be viewed by him who ſtrives intently to behold it. Again, in itſelf contraries always appear, the ſmall and the great, the leſs and the more, deficience and exceſs. So that it is a phantom, neither abiding

form. Whenever, therefore, form accedes, it conciliates in amicable unity, the parts which are about to compoſe a whole: for being itſelf one, it is not

ing, nor yet able to fly away: capable of no one denomination, and poſſeſſing no power from intellect; but conſtituted in the defect, and ſhade as it were of all real being. Hence, too, in each of its vaniſhing appellations, it eludes our ſearch: for if we think of it as ſomething great, it is in the mean time ſmall; if as ſomething more, it becomes leſs; and the apparent being which we meet with in its image, is non-being, and as it were a flying mockery. So that the forms which appear in matter, are merely ludicrous; ſhadows falling upon ſhadow, as in a mirror, where the poſition of a thing, is different from its real ſituation; and which, though apparently full of forms, poſſeſſes nothing real and true. But the things which enter and depart from matter, are nothing but imitations of being, and ſemblances, flowing about a formleſs ſemblance. They appear, indeed, to affect ſomething in the ſubject-matter, but in reality produce nothing: from their debile and flowing nature, being endued with no ſolidity, and no rebounding power. And ſince matter, likewiſe, has no ſolidity, they penetrate it without diviſion, like images in water, or as if any one ſhould fill a vacuum with forms."

wonder-

wonderful that the ſubject of its power ſhould tend to unity, as far as the nature of a compound will admit. Hence beauty is eſtabliſhed in multitude, when the many is reduced into one; and in this caſe it communicates itſelf both to the parts, and to the whole. But when a particular one, compoſed from ſimilar parts, is received, it gives itſelf to the whole, without departing from the ſameneſs and integrity of its nature. Thus at one and the ſame time, it communicates itſelf to the whole building, and its ſeveral parts; and at another time confines itſelf to a ſingle ſtone: and then the firſt participation ariſes from the operations of art, but the ſecond from the formation of nature. And hence body becomes beautiful, through the commu-

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nion ſupernally proceeding from divinity.

But the ſoul, by her innate power, than which nothing more powerful, in judging its proper concerns, when another ſoul concurs in the deciſion, acknowledges the beauty of forms. And, perhaps, its knowledge in this caſe ariſes from its accommodating its internal ray of beauty to form, and truſting to this in its judgment; in the ſame manner as a rule is employed, in the deciſion of what is ſtrait. But how can that which is inherent in body, accord with that which is above body? Let us reply by aſking how the architect pronounces the building beautiful, by accommodating the external ſtructure to the fabric in his ſoul? Perhaps, becauſe the outward building,

building, when entirely deprived of the ſtones, is no other than the intrinſic form, divided by the external maſs of matter, but indiviſibly exiſting, though appearing in the many. When, therefore, ſenſe beholds the form in bodies, at ſtrife with matter, binding and vanquiſhing its contrary nature, and ſees form gracefully ſhining forth in other forms, it collects together the ſcattered whole, and introduces it to itſelf, and to the indiviſible form within; and renders it conſonant, congruous and friendly to its own intimate form. Thus, to the good man, virtue ſhining forth in youth is lovely, becauſe conſonant to the true virtue, which lies deep in the ſoul. But the ſimple beauty of colour ariſes, when light, which is ſomething incorporeal,

and

and reaſon and form, entering the obſcure involutions of matter, irradiates and forms its dark and formleſs nature. It is on this account that fire ſurpaſſes other bodies in beauty, becauſe, compared with the other elements, it obtains the order of form: for it is more eminent than the reſt, and is the moſt ſubtle of all, bordering as it were on an incorporeal nature. Add too, that though impervious itſelf, it is intimately received by others; for it imparts heat, but admits no cold. Hence it is the firſt nature which is ornamented with colour, and is the ſource of it to others: and on this account it beams forth exalted like ſome immaterial form. But when it cannot vanquiſh its ſubject, as participating but a ſlender light, it is no longer beautiful:

tiful: becauſe it does not receive the whole form of colour. Again, the muſic of the voice rouſes the harmony latent in the ſoul, and opens her eye to the perception of beauty, exiſting in many the ſame. But it is the property of the harmony perceived by ſenſe, to be meaſured by numbers, yet not in every proportion of number or voice; but in that alone which is obedient to the production, and conqueſt of its ſpecies. And thus much for the beauties of ſenſe, which, like images and ſhadows flowing into matter, adorn with ſpectacles of beauty its formleſs being, and ſtrike the reſpective ſenſes with wonder and delight.

But it is now time, leaving every object of ſenſe far behind, to contem-

plate, by a certain aſcent, a beauty of a much higher order: a beauty not viſible to the corporeal eye, but alone manifeſt to the brighter eye of the ſoul, independent of all corporeal aid. However, ſince, without ſome previous perception of beauty, it is impoſſible to expreſs by words the beauties of ſenſe, but we muſt remain in the ſtate of the blind; ſo neither can we ever ſpeak of the beauty of offices and ſciences, and whatever is allied to theſe, if deprived of their intimate poſſeſſion. Thus we ſhall never be able to tell of virtue's brightneſs, unleſs by looking inward we perceive the fair countenance of juſtice and temperance, and are convinced that neither the evening nor morning-ſtar, are half ſo beautiful and bright. But it is requiſite

to perceive objects of this kind with that eye by which the ſoul beholds ſuch real beauties. Beſides, it is neceſſary that whoever perceives this ſpecies of beauty, ſhould be ſeized with much greater delight, and more vehement admiration, than any corporeal beauty can excite; as now embracing beauty real and ſubſtantial. Such affections, I ſay, ought to be excited about true * beauty, as admiration and ſweet aſtoniſhment; deſire, alſo and love, and a pleaſant trepidation. For all ſouls, as I may ſay, are affected in this manner about inviſible objects, but thoſe the moſt who have the

* *True beauty.* Inſtead of περὶ τὸ ὅ τι ἂν ᾖ καλὸν, it ſhould doubtleſs be read περὶ τὸν ἀληθινον καλὸν, which ſenſe is adopted in the paraphraſe; and which I wonder Ficinus did not obſerve.

ſtrongeſt propenſity to their love; as it likewiſe happens about corporeal beauty: for all equally perceive beautiful corporeal forms, yet all are not equally excited, but lovers in the greateſt degree.

But it may be allowable to interrogate thoſe who riſe above ſenſe, concerning the effects of love in this manner: of ſuch we enquire, what do you ſuffer reſpecting fair ſtudies, and beautiful manners, virtuous works, affections, and habits, and the beauty of ſouls? What do you experience on perceiving yourſelves lovely within? After what manner are you rouſed as it were to a Bacchanalian fury; ſtriving to converſe with yourſelves, and collecting yourſelves ſeparate from the impediments of body? For thus are true

true lovers enraptured. But what is the cauſe of theſe wonderful effects? It is neither figure, nor colour, nor magnitude; but ſoul herſelf, fair through temperance, and not with the falſe gloſs of colour, and bright with the ſplendours of virtue herſelf. And this you experience as often as you turn your eye inwards; or contemplate the amplitude of another ſoul: the juſt manners, the pure temperance; fortitude venerable by her noble countenance; and modeſty and honeſty walking with an intrepid ſtep, and a tranquil and ſteady aſpect; and, what crowns the beauty of them all, conſtantly receiving the irradiations of a divine intellect.

In what reſpect then, ſhall we call theſe beautiful? For they are ſuch as

they appear, nor did ever any one behold them, and not pronounce them realities. But as yet reaſon deſires to know how they cauſe the lovelineſs of the ſoul; and what that grace is in every virtue which beams forth to view like light? Are you then willing we ſhould aſſume the contrary part, and conſider what in the ſoul appears deformed? for, perhaps it will facilitate our ſearch, if we can thus find what is baſe in the ſoul, and from whence it derives its original.

Let us ſuppoſe a ſoul deformed, to be one intemperate and unjuſt, filled with a multitude of deſires, a prey to fooliſh hopes, and vexed with idle fears; through its diminutive and avaricious nature the ſubject of envy; employed ſolely in thought of what is moral

mortal and low; bound in the fetters of impure delights; living the life, whatever it may be, peculiar to the paſſion of body; and ſo totally merged in ſenſuality as to eſteem the baſe pleaſant, and the deformed beautiful and fair. But may we not ſay, that this baſeneſs approaches the ſoul as an adventitious evil, under the pretext of adventitious beauty; which, with great detrimenr, renders it impure, and pollutes it with much depravity; ſo that it neither poſſeſſes true life, nor true ſenſe, but is endued with a ſlender life through its mixture of evil, and this worn out by the continual depredations of death: no longer perceiving the objects of mental viſion, nor permitted any more to dwell with itſelf, becauſe ever hurried away to

things obſcure, external, and low? Hence, becoming impure, and being on all ſides ſnatched in the unceaſing whirl of ſenſible forms, it is covered with corporeal ſtains, and wholly given to matter, contracts deeply its nature, loſes all it original ſplendor, and almoſt changes its own ſpecies into that of another: juſt as the priſtine beauty of the moſt lovely form would be deſtroyed by its total immerſion in mire and clay. But the deformity of the firſt ariſes from inward filth, of its own contracting; of the ſecond, from the acceſſion of ſome foreign nature. If ſuch a one then deſires to recover his former beauty, it is neceſſary to cleanſe the infected parts, and thus by a thorough purgation to reſume his original form. Hence, then, if we aſſert

that

that the ſoul, by her mixture, confuſion and commerce with body and matter, becomes thus baſe, our aſſertion will, I think, be right. For the baſeneſs of the ſoul conſiſts in not being pure and ſincere. And as the gold is deformed by the adherence of earthly clods, which are no ſooner removed than on a ſudden the gold ſhines forth with its native purity; and then becomes beautiful when ſeparated from natures foreign from its own, and when it is content with its own purity for the poſſeſſion of beauty: ſo the ſoul, when ſeparated from the ſordid deſires engendered, by its too great immerſion in body; and liberated from the dominion of every perturbation, can thus and thus only, blot out the baſe ſtains imbibed from its union with

with body; and thus becoming alone, will doubtleſs expel all the turpitude contracted from a nature ſo oppoſite to its own.

Indeed, as the ancient oracle declares, temperance and fortitude, prudence and every virtue, are certain purgatives of the ſoul; and hence the ſacred myſteries propheſy obſcurely, yet with truth, that the ſoul not purified lies in Tartarus, immerſed in filth. Since the impure is, from his depravity, the friend of filth; as ſwine, from their ſordid body, delight in mire alone. * For what elſe is true temperance than not to indulge in corporeal delights, but to fly from their connection,

* *For what elſe is true temperance*, &c. For a full account of the diviſion and nature of the virtues, ſee Porphyry's Ἀφορμαὶ πρὸς τὰ Νοητά. p. 235.

as things which are neither pure, nor the offspring of purity? And true fortitude is not to fear death: for death is nothing more than a certain ſeparation of ſoul from body; and this he will not fear, who deſires to be alone. Again, magnanimity is the contempt of every mortal concern; it is the wing by which we fly into the regions of intellect. And laſtly, prudence is no other than intelligence, declining ſubordinate objects; and directing the eye of the ſoul to that which is immortal and divine. The ſoul, thus refined, becomes form and reaſon, is altogether incorporeal and intellectual; and wholly participates of that divine nature, which is the fountain of lovelineſs, and of whatever is allied to the beautiful and fair. Hence, the ſoul,

reduced

reduced to intellect, becomes aſtoniſhingly beautiful; for as the lambent flame which appears detached from the burning wood, enlightens its dark and ſmoky parts, ſo intellect irradiates and adorns the inferior powers of the ſoul, which, without its aid, would be buried in the gloom of formleſs matter. But intellect, and whatever emanates from intellect, is not the foreign, but the proper ornament of the ſoul: for the being of the ſoul, when abſorbed in intellect, is then alone real and true. It is, therefore, rightly ſaid, that the beauty and good of the ſoul conſiſts in her ſimilitude to the Deity; for from hence flows all her beauty, and her allotment of a better being. But the beautiful itſelf is that which is called beings; and

turpitude

turpitude is of a different nature, and participates more of non-entity than being.

But, perhaps, the good and the beautiful are the ſame, and muſt be inveſtigated by one and the ſame proceſs; and in like manner the baſe and the evil. And in the firſt rank we muſt place the beautiful, and conſider it as the ſame with the good; from which immediately emanates intellect as beautiful. Next to this, we muſt conſider the ſoul receiving its beauty from intellect; and every inferior beauty deriving its origin from the forming power of the ſoul, whether converſant in fair actions and offices, or ſciences and arts. Laſtly, bodies themſelves participate of beauty from the ſoul, which, as ſomething divine,

and

and a portion of the beautiful itſelf, renders whatever it ſupervenes and ſubdues, beautiful, as far as its natural capacity will admit.

Let us, therefore, reaſcend to the good itſelf, which every ſoul deſires; and in which it can alone find perfect repoſe. For, if any one ſhall become acquainted with this ſource of beauty, he will then know what I ſay, and after what manner he is beautiful. Indeed, whatever is deſirable is a kind of good, ſince to this deſire tends. But they alone purſue true good, who riſe to intelligible beauty; and ſo far only tend to good itſelf, as far as they lay aſide the deformed veſtments of matter, with which they became connected in their deſcent. Juſt as thoſe who penetrate into the holy retreats

of ſacred myſteries, are firſt purified, and then diveſt themſelves of their garments, until ſome one, by ſuch a proceſs, having diſmiſſed every thing foreign from the God, by himſelf alone, beholds the ſolitary principle of the univerſe, ſincere, ſimple, and pure, from which all things depend, and to whoſe tranſcendent perfections the eyes of all intelligent natures are directed, as the proper cauſe of being, life, and intelligence. With what ardent love, with what ſtrong deſire will he who enjoys this tranſporting viſion be inflamed, while vehemently affecting to become one with this ſupreme beauty? For thus it is ordained, that he who does not yet perceive him, yet deſires him as good: but he who

who enjoys the viſion, is enraptured with his beauty; and is equally filled with admiration and delight. Hence, ſuch a one is agitated with a ſalutary aſtoniſhment; is affected with the higheſt and trueſt love; derides vehement affections, and inferior loves, and deſpiſes the beauty which he once approved. Such, too, is the condition of thoſe, who, on perceiving the forms of gods or dæmons, no longer eſteem the faireſt of corporeal forms. What then muſt be the condition of that being, who beholds the beautiful itſelf? * In itſelf perfectly pure, not confined by

* *In itſelf perfectly pure.* This is analogous to the deſcription of the beautiful in the latter part of Diotima's Speech in the Banquet; a ſpeech which is ſurely unequalled, both for elegance of compoſition and ſublimity of ſentiment. Indeed, all the diſciples

by any corporeal bond, neither exiſting in the heavens, nor in the earth, nor to be imaged by the moſt lovely form imagination can conceive; ſince theſe are all adventitious and mixt, and mere ſecondary beauties, proceeding from the beautiful itſelf. If, then, any one ſhould ever behold that which is the ſource of munificence to others, remaining in itſelf, while it communicates to all, and receiving nothing, becauſe poſſeſſing an inexhauſtible fulneſs; and ſhould ſo abide in the intuition, as to become ſimilar to his nature, what more

diſciples of Plato are remarkable for nothing ſo much as their profound and exalted conceptions of the Deity; and he who can read the works of Plotinus and Proclus in particular, and afterwards pity the weakneſs and erroneouſneſs of their opinions on this ſubject, may be fairly preſumed to be himſelf equally an object of pity and contempt.

of beauty can ſuch a one deſire? For ſuch beauty, ſince it is ſupreme in dignity and excellence, cannot fail of rendering its votaries lovely and fair. Add too, that ſince the object of conteſt to ſouls, is the higheſt beauty, we ſhould ſtrive for its acquiſition with unabated ardor, leſt we ſhould be deſerted of that bliſsful contemplation, which whoever purſues in the right way, becomes bleſſed from the happy viſion; and which he who does not obtain, is unavoidably unhappy. For the miſerable man, is not he who neglects to purſue fair colours, and beautiful corporeal forms; who is deprived of power, and falls from dominion and empire; but he alone who is deſtitute of this divine poſſeſſion, for which the ample dominion of the earth and ſea,

and the ſtill more extended empire of the heavens, muſt be relinquiſhed and forgot, if, deſpiſing and leaving theſe far behind, we ever intend to arrive at ſubſtantial felicity, by beholding the beautiful itſelf.

What meaſures, then, ſhall we adopt? What machine employ, or what reaſon conſult, by means of which we may contemplate this ineffable beauty: a beauty abiding in the moſt divine ſanctuary, without ever proceeding from its ſacred retreats, leſt it ſhould be beheld by the profane and vulgar eye? We muſt enter deep into ourſelves, and, leaving behind the objects of corporeal ſight, no longer look back after any of the accuſtomed ſpectacles of ſenſe. For, it is neceſſary that whoever beholds

this beauty, ſhould withdraw his view from the faireſt corporeal forms; and, convinced that theſe are nothing more than images, veſtiges, and ſhadows of beauty, ſhould eagerly ſoar to the fair original from which they are derived. For he who ruſhes to theſe lower beauties, as if graſping realities, when they are only like beautiful images appearing in water, will, doubtleſs, like him in the fable, by ſtretching after the ſhadow, ſink into the lake, and diſappear. For, by thus embracing and adhering to corporeal forms, he is precipitated, not ſo much in his body, as in his ſoul, into profound and horrid darkneſs; and thus blind, like thoſe in the infernal regions, converſes only with phantoms, deprived of the perception of what is real and true.

true. It is here, then, we may more truly exclaim, * " Let us depart from " hence, and fly to our father's delight- " ful land." But, by what leading ſtars ſhall we direct our flight, and what means avoid the magic power of Circe, and the detaining charms of Calypſo? † For thus the fable of Ulyſſes

* *Let us depart*, &c. Vide Hom. Iliad. lib. ii. 140. et lib. ix. 27.

φεύγωμεν σὺν νευσί φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.

† Porphyry inform us, in his excellent treatiſe, De Antro Nymph. " that it was the opinion of Numenius, the Pythagorean, (to which he alſo aſſents) that the perſon of Ulyſſes, in the Odyſſey, repreſents to us a man, who paſſes in a regular manner, over the dark and ſtormy ſea of generation; and thus, at length, arrives at that region where tempeſts and ſeas are unknown, and finds a nation, who

Ne'er knew ſalt, or heard the billows roar."

Indeed, he who is conſcious of the deluſions of the preſent life, and the enchantments of this material houſe, in which his ſoul is detained, like Ulyſſes in the irriguous cavern of Calypſo, will, like him-

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lyſſes obſcurely ſignifies, which feigns him abiding an unwilling exile, though pleaſant ſpectacles were continually preſented to his ſight; and every thing was promiſed to invite his ſtay which can delight the ſenſes, and captivate

continually bewail his captivity, and inly pine for a return to his native country. Of ſuch a one it may be ſaid as of Ulyſſes (in the excellent and pathetic tranſlation of Mr. Pope,)

* But ſad Ulyſſes by himſelf apart,
Pour'd the big ſorrows of his ſwelling heart;
All on the lonely ſhore he ſate to weep,
And roll'd his eyes around the reſtleſs deep:
Tow'rd the lov'd coaſt, he roll'd his eyes in vain,
Till, dimm'd with riſing grief, they ſtream'd again."

Such a one, too, like Ulyſſes, will not always wiſh in vain for a paſſage over the dark ocean of a corporeal life, but by the aſſiſtance of Mercury, who may be conſidered as the emblem of reaſon, he will at length be enabled to quit the magic embraces of Calypſo, the goddeſs of Senſe, and to return again into the arms of Penelope, or Philoſophy, the long loſt and proper object of his love.

* Odyſſey. book v. 103.

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the heart. But our true country, like that of Ulyſſes, is from whence we came, and where our father lives. But where is the ſhip to be found, by which we can accompliſh our flight? For our feet are unequal to the taſk, ſince they only take us from one part of the earth to another. May we not each of us ſay,

* What ſhips have I, what ſailors to convey,
What oars to cut the long laborious way?

But it is in vain that we prepare horſes to draw, or ſhips to tranſport us to our native land. On the contrary, neglecting all theſe, as unequal to the taſk, and excluding them entirely from our view, having now cloſed

* See Pope's Homer's Odyſſey, Book v. 181.

the corporeal eye, * we muſt ſtir up, and aſſume a purer eye within, which

* *We muſt ſtir up and aſſume a purer eye within.* This inward eye, is no other than intellect, which contains in its moſt inward receſſes, a certain ray of light, participated from the ſun of Beauty and Good, by which the ſoul is enabled to behold and become united with her divinely ſolitary original. This divine ray, or, as Proclus calls it συνθημά, a mark or impreſſion, is thus beautifully deſcribed by that philoſopher, (Theol. Plat. p. 105). "The Author of the univerſe, (ſays he) has planted in all beings impreſſions of his own perfect excellence, and through theſe, he has placed all beings about himſelf, and is preſent with them in an ineffable manner, exempt from the univerſality of things. Hence, every being entering into the ineffable ſanctuary of its own nature, finds there a ſymbol of the Father of all. And by this myſtical impreſſion, which correſponds to his nature, they become united with their original, diveſting themſelves of their own eſſence, and haſtening to become his impreſſion alone; and, through a deſire of his unknown nature, and of the fountain of good, to participate him alone. And when they have aſcended as far as to this cauſe, they enjoy perfect tranquility, and are converſant in the perception of his divine progeny, and of the love which all things naturally poſſeſs of goodneſs, unknown, ineffable, without participation, and tranſcendently full."

all

all men poſſeſs, but which is alone uſed by a few. What is it then this inward eye beholds? Indeed, ſuddenly raiſed to intellectual viſion, it cannot perceive an object exceeding bright. The ſoul muſt therefore be firſt accuſtomed to contemplate fair ſtudies, and then beautiful works; not ſuch as ariſe from the operations of art, but ſuch as are the offspring of worthy men: and next to this, it is neceſſary to view the ſoul which is the parent of this lovely race. But you will aſk, after what manner is this beauty of a worthy ſoul to be perceived? It is thus. Recall your thoughts inward, and if, while contemplating yourſelf, you do not perceive yourſelf beautiful, imitate the ſtatuary; who, when he deſires a beautiful ſtatue, cuts away what

what is ſuperfluous, ſmooths and poliſhes what is rough, and never deſiſts until he has given it all the beauty his art is able to effect. In this manner muſt you proceed, by lopping what is luxuriant, directing what is oblique, and, by purgation, illuſtrating what is obſcure; and thus continue to poliſh and beautify your ſtatue, until the divine ſplendor of Virtue ſhines upon you, and Temperance, ſeated in pure and holy majeſty, riſes to your view. If you become thus purified, reſiding in yourſelf, and having nothing any longer to impede this unity of mind, and no farther mixture to be found within, but perceiving your whole ſelf to be a true light, and light alone; a light which, though immenſe, is not meaſured by any magnitude, nor limited by

by any circumſcribing figure, but is every where immeaſurable, as being greater than every meaſure, and more excellent than every quantity: if, perceiving yourſelf thus improved, and truſting ſolely to yourſelf, as no longer requiring a guide, fix now ſtedfaſtly your mental view, for with the intellectual eye alone, can ſuch immenſe beauty be perceived. But, if your eye is yet infected with any ſordid concern, and not thoroughly refined, while it is on the ſtretch to behold this moſt ſhining ſpectacle, it will be immediately darkened and incapable of intuition, though ſome one ſhould declare the ſpectacle preſent, which it might be otherwiſe able to diſcern. For, it is here neceſſary, that the perceiver and the thing perceived, ſhould be ſimilar

to

to each other, before true viſion can exiſt. Thus the ſenſitive eye, can never be able to ſurvey the orb of the ſun, unleſs ſtrongly endued with ſolar fire, and participating largely of the vivid ray. Every one, therefore, muſt become divine, and of godlike beauty, before he can gaze upon a god, and the beautiful itſelf. Thus proceeding in the right way of beauty, he will firſt aſcend into the region of intellect, contemplating every fair ſpecies, the beauty of which he will perceive to be no other than ideas themſelves; for all things are beautiful by the ſupervening irradiations of theſe, becauſe they are the offspring and eſſence of intellect. But that which is ſuperior to theſe, is no other than the fountain of good, every where widely diffuſ-

diffuſing around the ſtreams of beauty, and hence, in diſcourſe, called the beautiful itſelf; becauſe, beauty is its immediate offspring. But, if you accurately diſtinguiſh the intelligible objects, you will call the beautiful the receptacle of ideas; but the good itſelf, which is ſuperior, the fountain and principle of the beautiful; or, you may place the firſt beautiful and the good in the ſame principle, independent of the beauty which there ſubſiſts *.

* But before I take my leave of Plotinus, I cannot refrain from addreſſing a few words to the Platonical part of my readers. If ſuch, then, is the wiſdom contained in the works of this philoſopher, as we may conclude from the preſent ſpecimen, is it fit ſo divine a treaſure ſhould be concealed in ſhameful oblivion? With reſpect to true philoſophy, you muſt be ſenſible that all modern ſects are in a ſtate of barbarous ignorance: for Materialiſm, and its attendant Senſuality, have darkened the eyes of the *many*, with the miſts of error; and are continually ſtrength-

ſtrengthening their corporeal tie. And can any thing more effectually diſſipate this increaſing gloom than diſcourſes compoſed by ſo ſublime a genius, pregnant with the moſt profound conceptions, and every where full of intellectual light? Can any thing ſo thoroughly deſtroy the phantom of falſe enthuſiaſm, as eſtabliſhing the real object of the true? Let us then boldly enliſt ourſelves under the banners of Plotinus, and, by his aſſiſtance, vigorouſly repel the encroachments of error, plunge her dominions into the abyſs of forgetfulneſs, and diſperſe the darkneſs of her baneful night. For, indeed, there never was a period which required ſo much philoſophic exertion; or ſuch vehement contention from the lovers of Truth. On all ſides, nothing of philoſophy remains but the name, and this is become the ſubject of the vileſt proſtitution: ſince it is not only engroſſed by the Naturaliſt, Chemiſt, and Anatomiſt, but is uſurped by the Mechanic, in every trifling invention, and made ſubſervient to the lucre of traffic and merchandize. There cannot ſurely be a greater proof of the degeneracy of the times than ſo unparalleled a degradation, and ſo barbarous a perverſion of terms. For, the word philoſophy, which implies the love of wiſdom, is now become the ornament of folly. In the times of its inventor, and for many ſucceeding ages, it was expreſſive of modeſty and worth: in our days, it is the badge of impudence and vain pretenſions. It was formerly the ſymbol of the profound and contemplative genius; it is now the mark of the ſuperficial and unthinking practitioner. It was once reverenced

enced by kings, and clothed in the robes of nobility; it is now (according to its true acceptation) abandoned and deſpiſed, and ridiculed by the vileſt Plebeian. Permit me, then, my friends, to addreſs you in the words of Achilles to Hector.

Rouſe, then, your forces, this important hour,
Collect your ſtrength, and call forth all your pow'r.

Since, to adopt the animated language of Neptune to the Greeks,

——————on daſtards, dead to fame,
I waſte no anger, for they feel no ſhame;
But you, the pride, the flower of all our hoſt,
My heart weeps blood, to ſee your glory loſt.

Nor deem the exhortation impertinent, and the danger groundleſs.

For lo! the fated time, th' appointed ſhore;
Hark! the gates burſt, the brazen barriers roar.

Impetuous ignorance is thundering at the bulwarks of philoſophy, and her ſacred retreats are in danger of being demoliſhed, through our feeble reſiſtance. Riſe, then, my friends, and the victory will be ours. The foe is indeed numerous, but, at the ſame time, feeble: and the weapons of truth, in the hands of vigorous union, deſcend with irreſiſtible force, and are fatal wherever they fall.

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